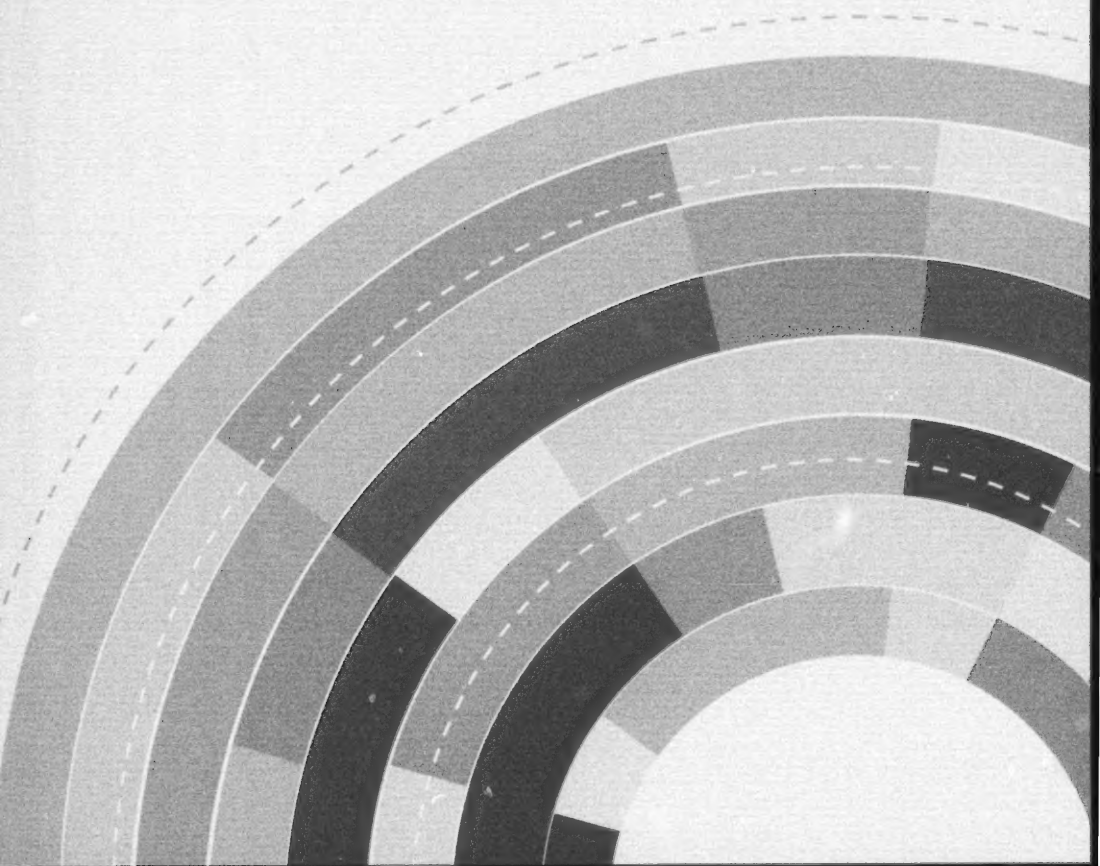
SSHRC CRSH

STRENGTHENING CANADA'S CULTURES OF INNOVATION

STRATEGIC PLAN **2013-16**



SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH BUILDS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PEOPLE, PAST AND PRESENT, WITH A VIEW TO CREATING A BETTER FUTURE.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada
Canada

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Foreword

In 2007, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) published *Framing Our Direction*, a three-year plan expressing SSHRC's strategic ambitions in terms of quality, connections and impact. These ambitions inspired and guided the evolution of our governance and corporate culture; the design and delivery of our programming, including enhancements to the merit review process; and the renewal of our relationships with the broader research community, our sister agencies and society at large. The plan also positioned SSHRC within the federal science and technology environment, and articulated strategies to guide partnership and knowledge mobilization activities and to focus on the results and impacts of the research and research training we support.

Its successor document, *Framing Our Direction 2010–12*, built on this foundation, charting an ambitious long-term path of renewal anchored in three new umbrella programs: Talent, Insight and Connection. Supporting this major initiative were specific commitments related to merit review; the renewal of SSHRC's priority research areas; the integration of knowledge mobilization objectives throughout our programs, processes and policies; the strengthening of engagement activities; and the implementation of advanced tools for service delivery.

Over the next three years, SSHRC will build on these accomplishments, not only by focusing on consolidating and sustaining them, but also by helping Canada forge new pathways that lead to the robust cultures of innovation required for prosperous, just and resilient societies in the 21st century.

Like all successful and innovative organizations, SSHRC depends on a talented team of skilled and dedicated individuals. By living our values of integrity, teamwork and excellence, we will pursue our strategy with an eye to achieving SSHRC's primary strategic outcome: positioning Canada as a world leader in social sciences and humanities research and research training. Our enduring commitment is to do all that we can to ensure that knowledge and understanding about people—past and present—contribute to a better future for Canada and the world.

Chad Gaffield

President
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

About SSHRC

We build knowledge. We develop talent.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is the federal agency that promotes and supports postsecondary research and research training in the humanities and social sciences. Through its three umbrella programs of Talent, Insight and Connection, SSHRC develops talented leaders; enables the highest levels of research excellence in Canada; and facilitates knowledge-sharing and collaboration across research disciplines, postsecondary institutions and all sectors of society.

Created by an act of Parliament in 1977, SSHRC reports to Parliament through the Minister of Industry.

We support research and talent that are central to quality of life and innovation.

SSHRC-supported research enhances our collective understanding of social, cultural, technological, environmental and economic issues. It enriches our knowledge about who we are as human beings, what we need to thrive in complex and challenging times, and where we are headed in the decades to come.

The work SSHRC supports encourages the deepest levels of inquiry into the human condition in all its complexity and diversity. It spurs innovative researchers to learn from one another's disciplines, delve into collaborations and achieve common goals for the betterment of Canadian society. Researchers engage with communities, businesses and governments; their knowledge and skills enable all sectors to innovate and improve people's lives.

In this, SSHRC also invests directly in Canada's future, especially in developing the emerging generation. Through the social sciences and humanities, students gain not only invaluable knowledge and understanding about how the world works—they also receive the best possible training in critical thinking, complex decision-making and creative exploration. By investing in scholarships, fellowships and research training, SSHRC helps develop Canada's best and brightest scholars and researchers into future leaders.

We help Canada realize its potential in the 21st century.

Now, more than ever, Canadians realize a compelling truth: the challenges of the 21st century require the independent thinking about and creative inquiry into the complexities of human thought and behaviour that are the hallmarks of humanities and social sciences research. This is illustrated by the continued federal investments in science, technology and innovation through SSHRC since the launch of Canada's science and technology strategy in 2007. These investments assist SSHRC in supporting a strong foundation for excellence across all disciplines and areas of research, as well as cultivating robust cultures of innovation for the benefit of society.

By building knowledge and understanding that can help change the world, SSHRC-funded research has taken its place at the heart of the Canadian research and innovation landscape.

SSHRC's Strategic Outcome

SSHRC's primary strategic outcome:

To make Canada a world leader in social sciences and humanities research and research training

This is the goal to which SSHRC has committed —and for which it is accountable—on behalf of all Canadians. All SSHRC programs and activities are designed to support this objective.

This is an ambitious goal—and not one that SSHRC can achieve on its own. Rather, SSHRC shares this objective with Canada's postsecondary institutions and the 22,500 full-time faculty and 60,000 graduate students in the social sciences and humanities. It also shares this goal with the many private, public and not-for-profit sector organizations that need social sciences and humanities knowledge and expertise in order to succeed in their own mandates.

Making progress toward this strategic outcome requires SSHRC to consider several important drivers of change.

The changing social sciences and humanities research enterprise

Some of the changes transforming the social sciences and humanities have been developing for decades, while others reflect newly emerging issues. Researchers and students are increasingly asking questions and addressing them in ways that challenge established disciplinary boundaries. Many research fields are seeing an increase in scale: there are new, massive datasets as well as larger and more diverse research teams. Whether the project is small or large, digital scholarship is presenting new opportunities that depend on new research tools and infrastructure. Research that engages communities and the public, private and not-for-profit sectors is now common on campuses from coast to coast. And there is a growing appetite within both academic and non-academic sectors to see, access and use the knowledge and understanding that results from research.

Canada's postsecondary institutions

Since the 1970s, significant increases in federal funding for research and research talent have fostered a robust research culture in Canada's universities and, more recently, in its colleges as well. At the same time, Canada's postsecondary institutions are re-imagining their teaching, research and community engagement roles in response to significant new challenges in the

rapidly changing context of higher education. Profound shifts are already underway on Canada's campuses as postsecondary institutions develop new synergies to enhance learning, advance knowledge and help create a better future.

The science, technology and innovation agenda

Governments around the world have now recognized that research and research talent are essential to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global marketplace for ideas and skills, and thus ensure economic and social well-being. This is a dominant theme of Canada's 2007 science and technology strategy, as well as of more recent reports such as the *Review of Federal Support to Research and Development* (2011). The goal is to maximize the impact of research and to capture and communicate those impacts as widely as possible. As a result, researchers, institutions and funding agencies are deepening their engagement in knowledge mobilization and finding new ways to capture and communicate the many benefits research and research talent can offer to all sectors of the economy, culture and society.

Global challenges and the diplomacy of knowledge

The challenges faced by Canada—and the rest of the world—are characterized by their complexity, interconnection and global scope. Responding to these challenges in a globally competitive environment will require what His Excellency the Governor General of Canada David Johnston has called "the diplomacy of knowledge:" a commitment to deep collaboration across disciplines and across geographic borders, firmly rooted in Canada's strategic global priorities. Social, economic and technological innovation—fuelled by human capital, new ideas and the productive flow of knowledge within robust cultures of innovation—must be at the heart of effective Canadian responses to these complex, global challenges.

Key principles informing SSHRC's strategic priorities

SSHRC's ongoing interaction with universities, colleges and other organizations has brought to the fore a number of challenges that must be addressed if Canada is to advance its leadership in humanities and social sciences research and research talent development. In consideration of these challenges, as well as of the current context for research and SSHRC's role within Canada's research and innovation system, SSHRC identified three key principles to inform its strategic priorities for 2013–16:

Knowledge and understanding about human thought and behaviour are critical to helping Canada and the world address current and future challenges.

The topics of research in the social sciences and humanities are also central concerns of Canadians: Canada's place in the global economy, the success of aboriginal communities, the safety and security of our food systems—indeed, all the important issues of our time that concern human thought and behaviour. Moreover, social sciences and humanities research provides a diverse knowledge base that will be essential in addressing future challenges—both those we can predict and those we cannot. And by enabling the creation of up-to-date curricula for students from kindergarten all the way to our postsecondary institutions, this knowledge also contributes directly to an informed and educated citizenry. Increasingly, the knowledge, understanding and skills fostered by research training in the humanities and social sciences are valued by all sectors of the economy, especially as businesses and institutions embrace a new, people-centred model of innovation.

SSHRC must be responsive to the changing research enterprise and the changing context for research.

In recognition of the evolving context for research in Canada and around the world, SSHRC launched a program architecture renewal initiative in 2009 to streamline and enhance its suite of funding opportunities. An important part of the vision was that the new program architecture be simple, flexible and responsive, offering support for all modes of research and allowing researchers to determine the approach—working individually, as part of a small team, or through a more formal partnership between organizations—that best suits their research questions and objectives. As SSHRC works to consolidate and sustain the changes that have been implemented over the last five years, we must continue to monitor and adjust our programming in response to the dynamic research enterprise and the broader, changing context for research.

SSHRC must work in close collaboration with research institutions and other organizations that have a stake in the future of Canada's higher education and innovation system.

SSHRC understands that, in order to advance higher education, research and innovation in Canada, we must work closely with postsecondary institutions, other granting agencies and government departments, as well as with organizations in the private and not-for-profit sectors, whose stake in higher education and innovation is increasingly recognized. We must also be aware of Canada's position within the global context, build international connections, and take advantage of best practices developed elsewhere. In the evolving context for research, and especially in an era of fiscal constraint, all the constituent parts of the Canadian system must work together to ensure success.

SSHRC's Program Architecture Renewal

In 2010, following consultations with researchers, postsecondary institutions and partner organizations, SSHRC made significant changes to its suite of funding opportunities by reducing their number, increasing their flexibility and aligning their objectives under three new umbrella programs: Talent, Insight and Connection.

SSHRC's program architecture renewal initiative is enabling the humanities and social sciences research community to maximize its contributions by:

* Emphasizing impacts through new merit-review criteria that consider a broader range of research contributions, as well the likelihood of influence on critical social, cultural, economic, technological and environmental issues
* Encouraging broader participation in merit review by experts from many sectors
* Fostering partnerships across institutions and sectors that encourage a collaborative approach to designing and conducting research
* Implementing a flexible, responsive framework for funding research in priority areas
* Providing support for emerging scholars
* Revising reporting requirements for completed grants that focus on outputs, results and impacts
* Offering flexible programming and a more responsive competition cycle through:
    - three new umbrella programs, each providing a limited number of funding opportunities designed to allow applicants to choose the opportunity best suited to the nature and objectives of their project
    - broad, generic competitions with multiple deadlines
    - reduced application processing times

The work related to the program architecture renewal initiative is ongoing, with new elements of the Talent program set to be implemented in 2013. Moving forward, SSHRC will continue to consolidate and sustain the changes to its programs, policies and processes. It will also work to monitor the impacts of these changes, and to make adjustments as needed.

SSHRC's Strategic Priorities for 2013-16

SSHRC advances Canada as a world leader in social sciences and humanities research and research training by supporting world-class research and talent development through its three umbrella programs of Talent, Insight and Connection; and by promoting enabling policies and practices across the research and innovation system.

In this context, the following strategic priorities and subpriorities will receive particular attention over 2013-16:

1 Promote and support Canadian excellence in social sciences and humanities research and talent development

A. Promote the skills, tools and infrastructure necessary for success in research and research training
B. Champion merit review processes that are robust, efficient and sustainable, and that recognize a broad range of research contributions
C. Strengthen and promote international connections and collaboration in research and talent development

2 Work with Canadian postsecondary institutions and other organizations to build a 21st-century research and training environment in the humanities and social sciences

A. Facilitate world-class research and research training by regularly updating all steps in the grant management process to ensure they are effective, efficient and enabling
B. Strengthen policies and other supports that recognize, preserve and value the full range of outputs, outcomes and impacts of research and training
C. Support and broaden co-operation among Canada's granting agencies in policy and program development and delivery

3 Position knowledge and expertise about human thought and behaviour to bring maximal benefits to Canada and the world

A. Support research and talent development in important future challenge areas for Canada
B. Promote the value of multisectoral partnerships for Talent, Insight and Connection
C. Enhance and promote the contribution of social sciences and humanities to robust cultures of innovation across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in Canada

Canadian excellence in the social sciences and humanities in the global context

Over its 35-year history, SSHRC has focused on building Canada's capacity to undertake excellent research—and, as a result, has funded Canada's top researchers and research trainees. Because "excellence" is an ever-evolving target, its pursuit is both an enduring commitment and a priority.

Canada's excellence in research was recently assessed by the Council of Canadian Academies (CCA). In *The State of Science and Technology in Canada 2012*, the CCA reported that Canada ranks fourth in the world in research strength, and that Canada punches above its weight in terms of its share of the world's most frequently cited research articles. The humanities and social sciences are recognized in the report as contributing significantly to this excellence, with fields such as historical studies, the visual and performing arts, business and management, classics and criminology cited as areas of particular strength.

SSHRC recognizes that the skills involved in excellent research are both intellectual (e.g., rigour, objectivity, analysis, synthesis, creativity) and professional (e.g., leadership, communication, collaboration across disciplines, building of partnerships with community-based partners, building of networks, management of large teams). And because, especially in the digital age, the impacts of excellent research are increasingly recognized beyond the campus, what counts as a research contribution is also becoming increasingly varied.

SSHRC must continue to be at the forefront of recognizing research excellence in inclusive ways, by working closely with Canada's research community to update policies and practices for fostering research excellence. As the premier funder of social sciences and humanities research in Canada, SSHRC must also ensure its assessment criteria and merit review processes evolve in keeping with the changing character of research excellence. Finally, because research excellence is defined in an international context, Canadian social sciences and humanities research must be increasingly connected to global research networks and contribute to global research agendas.

SSHRC strategic priority for 2013-16:

1 **Promote and support Canadian excellence in social sciences and humanities research and talent development**

Subpriorities:

A. **Promote the skills, tools and infrastructure necessary for success in research and research training**

To nurture Canadian research excellence in an evolving collaborative and competitive global context, SSHRC will work with postsecondary institutions to create opportunities and incentives for Canadian researchers and trainees to share, promote and advance their professional skills in such areas as leading large research teams; developing multisectoral, multidisciplinary or multi-institutional partnerships; and championing effective knowledge mobilization.

Recognizing that excellent research develops and makes use of advanced research tools and infrastructure, SSHRC will also work with postsecondary institutions to enhance support for the development and application of new research tools and infrastructure for the social sciences and humanities.

B. **Champion merit review processes that are robust, efficient and sustainable, and that recognize a broad range of research contributions**

SSHRC's ability to support excellence relies on its practices of merit review, which were assessed by an international expert panel and were found to meet the highest international standards. As part of its program architecture renewal initiative, SSHRC reviewed and enhanced its merit review practices to reinforce an inclusive model of merit review: one that includes the perspectives of experts from all sectors and recognizes a full range of research contributions. This model reflects a culture shift taking place within the research community and among research partners, and will take time and continued effort—both internally and externally—to reinforce.

As research activities intensify, merit review becomes more challenging; there is an increasing administrative burden for funders and a reviewing burden for the research community and its partners. SSHRC can lighten the load by, for example, leveraging technology and standardizing business practices so the merit review process becomes more efficient and rewarding for reviewers.

C. Strengthen and promote international connections and collaboration in research and talent development

The excellence of Canadian research is what allows Canadians to participate in and lead global research initiatives—making international connections and collaboration both a cause and effect of excellence in research. The benefits to Canada of international research collaboration go beyond research; such linkages can facilitate access to new ideas, talent and markets that would otherwise be difficult to reach. Further, a global trade in ideas is required to address the complex and interconnected challenges of our time, and to advance the potential of research itself by charting new territory in emerging methodologies such as digital scholarship. The development of common or complementary approaches to shared problems, combined with increased collaboration among top talent around the world, will help build stronger, smarter and more resilient communities, nations and multinational regions.

SSHRC, in collaboration with research funding organizations around the world, must continue to reduce barriers and facilitate access for social sciences and humanities researchers and trainees to pursue international research collaborations and research training experience.

Building an enabling research and research training environment for the 21st century

Excellent research and research training do not occur in a vacuum—they require an enabling and fertile environment. This environment includes institutions (postsecondary institutions, in particular), as well as a number of other structures, policies and supports. SSHRC, along with other federal and provincial funders of research, plays an important part in shaping Canada's research and research training environment, both through the Indirect Costs Program, which is administered by SSHRC on behalf of the federal research granting agencies, as well as, significantly, through the ensemble of granting agency programs, policies and processes.

As the nature of research and scholarship evolves, and Canada's postsecondary campuses are transformed, the policies and processes that comprise Canada's research and training environment need to change as well. SSHRC, in collaboration with this country's postsecondary institutions, must adapt to ensure Canada can continue to provide the enabling environment in which researchers can do excellent work and in which new talent can be trained with advanced research skills.

SSHRC strategic priority for 2013-16:

2 **Work with Canadian postsecondary institutions and other organizations to build a 21st-century research and training environment in the humanities and social sciences**

Subpriorities:

A. **Facilitate world-class research and research training by regularly updating all steps in the grant management process to ensure they are effective, efficient and enabling**

The time and effort researchers and administrators invest in applying for grants, providing reviews, participating on adjudication committees, and accounting for the use of funds as well as the outcomes and impacts of funded research have all increased significantly over recent decades. Recognizing that everyone's efforts should be invested first and foremost in research, training and knowledge mobilization, SSHRC is committed to improving and streamlining administrative processes.

SSHRC will promote and pursue greater harmonization and standardization of the application, review, administration and results-monitoring processes for grants, scholarships and fellowships. It will also ensure that enabling technologies are in place for these purposes.

B. **Strengthen policies and other supports that recognize, preserve and value the full range of outputs, outcomes and impacts of research and training**

Capturing and maximizing the outputs and impacts of research, particularly publicly funded research, is becoming increasingly important. Canadians want to know more about the new ideas emerging from research, while the research community and its partners in other sectors increasingly want to share and build on each others' findings. New digital tools and technologies have spawned new forms of research outputs. Such technologies have also increased expectations of accessibility to research results, and sparked the imagination for new research opportunities and new applications for research data. Increasing the availability of research results can amplify the impact of a single research project: this is the core principle of scholarly publishing. But freer, quicker access to data and publications can take this even further.

SSHRC will work with researchers and institutions so they can more readily articulate the value and contributions of their work. SSHRC will also explore how the Canadian research system can provide more effective and integrated support for the stewardship of the research data and publications produced by its researchers.

C. **Support and broaden co-operation among Canada's granting agencies in policy and program development and delivery**

The complementary mandates of Canada's main research funding agencies (SSHRC, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research) and the special role played by the Canada Foundation for Innovation are important features of Canada's funding environment for postsecondary research and research training.

SSHRC will continue to work shoulder to shoulder with other federal research funding agencies to achieve efficiencies for the benefit of postsecondary institutions, students, researchers and their partners. Further, recognizing that the intersection of various fields of research may be where certain promising approaches to society's challenges are found, SSHRC will work with the other federal agencies to ensure Canada's research community has opportunities to access funding for initiatives that span the mandates of the federal research funding agencies.

Maximizing the benefits of the social sciences and humanities

The benefits of social sciences and humanities research can be seen in every aspect of Canadian society, from the laws and policies passed by our governments to the elementary school curricula taught in our classrooms. While it is clear that SSHRC funding is contributing to so many facets of life in communities across Canada and around the world, Canada's social sciences and humanities knowledge and expertise must be actively stewarded for its benefits to be sustained and available to its citizens.

SSHRC, in partnership with the research community, has a responsibility to ensure that the benefits of research and talent development are realized as fully as possible. We must see to it that opportunities are seized for the social sciences and humanities to contribute to national debate; address the challenges of today and tomorrow; and produce new intellectual, economic, social and cultural value. And this must be done for the benefit not only of Canada, but also the world.

SSHRC strategic priority for 2013-16:

3 | Position knowledge and expertise about human thought and behaviour to bring maximal benefits to Canada and the world

Subpriorities:

A. **Support research and talent development in important future challenge areas for Canada**

SSHRC has launched a structured and deliberative consultative process to identify challenges for Canada that are likely to emerge over the next five, 10 and 20 years—and to which the humanities and social sciences research community could contribute its knowledge, talent and expertise. Because these challenges will likely be quite complex, addressing them will require ideas and innovation from multiple sectors using multiple approaches. Research on people—both past and present—will provide a strong foundation upon which Canada will be able to adapt and succeed in the face of these future challenges.

SSHRC will announce the future challenge areas in 2013, and will take steps to promote research, research talent development and the mobilization of knowledge in these areas, in ways that complement support across all research areas. SSHRC's objectives are for Canada to have a recognized and responsive research capacity in the identified priority areas, and to contribute new knowledge and understanding in these areas to the benefit of Canada and the world.

B. **Promote the value of multisectoral partnerships for Talent, Insight and Connection**

With the launch of its renewed partnerships funding opportunities, SSHRC has reinforced its commitment to the potential of all types of partnerships—multisectoral, multidisciplinary and multi-institutional—to bring intellectual, cultural, social and economic benefits to Canada and the world.

For 2013-16, SSHRC has identified multisectoral partnerships as an area where potential exists for improved and enhanced participation; development and sharing of best practices; and communication of results and impacts. Multisectoral partnerships engage the users of research in the design and implementation of research projects, thereby increasing the potential for that research to contribute directly to innovation in the public, private and not-for profit sectors.

C. **Enhance and promote the contribution of social sciences and humanities to robust cultures of innovation across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in Canada**

Canada's investments in research lead to new insights that create new value for businesses, governments, communities and individuals. Such innovation—product innovation, process innovation, organizational innovation, marketing innovation—must be nurtured across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors to support job creation; increase productivity; and contribute to strong, prosperous, just and resilient communities.

Social innovation—that is, innovation focused more directly on new ways of engaging citizens, delivering public services, addressing social needs, and strengthening civil society—is the dimension of innovation in which the social sciences and humanities have played a leading role since the 1980s. Today, a new model of integrated innovation has emerged in which understanding people—human behaviours, decision-making, societal values and preferences—is increasingly recognized as a critical factor for success in any type of innovation. Moreover, leaders across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors are increasingly seeking to develop cultures of innovation that promote creativity and engagement throughout their institutions and communities. For these reasons, SSHRC's investments are truly at the heart of innovation in the 21st century.

As the capacity for innovation continues to be an essential feature of a resilient economy and a problem-solving society, SSHRC will continue to promote the model of integrated innovation, as well as the contributions of the social sciences and humanities to cultures of innovation that create new value across all sectors.

Imagining Canada's Future

Canada's success in the 21st century will depend on what could be considered "research preparedness." We need to think ahead—to collectively imagine all possible futures so we can anticipate and be prepared to address emerging societal and knowledge needs, and to guide the best choices going forward.

In 2011, SSHRC embarked on a process to identify challenges for Canada that are likely to emerge over the next five, 10 and 20 years in an evolving global context—and to which the humanities and social sciences research community could contribute its knowledge, talent and expertise.

Through a systematic approach and a structured series of activities undertaken over the course of two years, SSHRC engaged the research community as well as representatives of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors in this discussion and exploration.

SSHRC will announce these future challenges by summer 2013. These will be integrated, as appropriate, within SSHRC's Talent, Insight and Connection programs to stimulate research and research-related activities in these areas. They may also influence other corporate activities. The list of challenges will be revisited on a periodic basis.

SSHRC's Enduring Ambitions

Quality

To enhance the quality of, and support for, research and research training in the social sciences and humanities

Connections

To enable connections among disciplines (including those in engineering and the natural and health sciences) as well as between research and the larger community, in Canada and in the rest of the world

Impact

To increase the impact of research and research training for the benefit of society